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An educated agricultural public

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AN EDUCATED AGRICULTURAL PUBLIC

After spending the better part of his life laying the foundation for our present system of nature study courses and looking back through the years of his labors, Froebel, the son of a German preacher, gave us this bit of philosophy: "The clearer the thread that runs through our lives backward to our childhood, the clearer will be our onward glance to the goal."

To get a clear conception of what the relation of education to agriculture has been and is in any section, and what the relationship is likely to mean to the future, it seems appropriate briefly to follow the thread of that relationship back to its earlier years.

Early in the 16th century we discover a period of intense agitation in the interest of general social, economic, and religious reform. The names of Luther, Calvin, John Huss, and Rabelais, and later Pestalozzi, Comenius, Franke, and Rousseau stand out as the great leaders of that time. They believed all were entitled to education. And their efforts bore fruit in later years in a militant tide of educational reform that swept over all Europe. This was during the latter part of the 18th century. Pestalozzi, Comenius, Franke, Thomasius, Ferdinand Kinderman, Froebel, Thaer, Wollf, and others not only championed the cause of agricultural education but put their ideas into definite practice through the organization of schools where agriculture, and often household practice, was taught as chief topics and where the children worked in the fields and vineyards studying agriculture at first-hand and earning their board and keep as well. Non-conformists all, these early leaders and their efforts were subject to all manner of ridicule and derision. Some were adjudged as well-meaning but of very doubtful mentality. All were regarded as radicals and some were persecuted to the extent

of being

of being forced to flee their homes and countries. Yet they found hearers, won a following, and laid the foundation of modern public education and democratic social reform. Their day very definitely marks the opening of a new and, from the standpoint of the common man, a peculiarly glorious era in the world's history.

Toward the close of the 18th century we find Frederick the Great setting aside more than thirty million dollars a year to support a sweeping program of agricultural regeneration in Germany. Franke and Thomasius had already gotten in their work at Halle. At the same time and inspired by the preachings and work of the Bohemian reformer, Ferdinand Kinderman, we find Maria Therisa urging and supporting the cause of public education throughout the Austrian Empire. In France agricultural professors were being appointed to schools. Indeed, special agricultural schools were being established. The University at Halle, the great state school at Grignon, just beyond Versailles, and that at Hofwyl in Switzerland are not only among the master-pieces of today's great array of educational institutions, but stand as monuments to the wisdom, courage, sacrifice, vision, and high sense of public duty so characteristic of these early leaders. These early leaders are the "divine democrats" of modern history--discoverers and champions of the way of modern civilization.

Almost upon the heels of permanent settlement here in America there arose a demand for a system of education that would be broader and more effective in giving intelligent directions to the daily activities of the people than that promoted principally by colonial religious organizations. Among the first advocates of a system of education that would definitely prepare boys and girls to meet the problems of making a living and of organizing and supporting sound government were Franklin, Jefferson, and Washington.

Both in the East and in the South we find agricultural societies urging reforms which included the teaching of agriculture in the schools. At an earlier date even we find the Franciscan Monks carrying on agricultural enterprises in connection with their missionary work in what is now Southwest Texas. The old irrigation works are theye yet.

Early in the 19th century Dr. John De La Howe established and endowed at what is now McCormick, South Carolina, an agricultural school and enrolled twenty-four poor children - twelve boys and twelve girls. These children, along with their studies, did work about the school and on the farm to help pay expenses. In 1829 the State Legislature made the endowment secure. This school, supported by the first manual training foundation in the new world, still stands as one of the mile posts in the onward mashh of educational progress.

The first of our American system of state agricultural colleges was established in Michigan in 1855. It is not only still in operation but is one of the great agricultural colleges of the world. Its first class of seven men gmad graduated in 1861, the year before the Land Grant College Act was signed by President Lincoln. It should be pointed out in this connection, however, that the first organized instruction in agriculture in this country so fas as the record discloses came of a gift by Governor Terrell to the University of Georgia in 1854.

During the quarter of a century preceding the signing of the Land Grant College Act, agitation for the establishment of agricultural colleges was widespread and most insistent. For a number of years the matter had been urged upon Congress by Congressman Morrill, son of a Vermont blacksmith and farmer. As Congressman he twice fathered the Land Grant College Bill through both houses of Congress, first securing its passage during the administration of President Buchannon. President Buchannon, however, was not convinced of either the necessity or desirability of type of institution. He therefore vetoed the Bill, giving as his reasons that its provisions were unconstitutional, that the field was already well occupied, and that as a matter of fact if he should sign the bill it would undoubtedly fail of its purpose. Undaunted, Mr. Morrill promptly introduced the Bill again and brought it again to final passage. In 1862 President Lincoln signed the Bill and thus gave the nation its first instance of national legislation in the interest of agricultural education.

Here it should be pointed out that the agricultural college was about the first institution of higher education to concede that public usefulness is supreme, that a college should conform to the needs of the people and not the people to the terms and standardsof the college.

The agricultural college idea was not welcome in the educational fraternity. There are those who would even now abolish it if they could. We still must fight, as developments during the last session of Congress so pointedly emphasize. The agricultural college was not only too democratic for the "elect" but in their opinion would lower the dignity of learning. Consequently the first attempts at establishing these collegesswere made a matter of widespread ridicule in professional circles. Old-line institutions fought the move bitterly. They rather unanimously agreed with President Buchannon that the field was already fully and most ably occupied, that there was no excuse for this type of institution anyway, and that it must of necessity fail of its purpose, and while so doing serve no higher purpose than interference with established institutions and established ways of teaching. This attitude, however, did not prevent agricultural college progress. That in Michigan was already under way, as we have already seen when the Land Grant College Act was signed by President Lincoln. True enough, it was some fifteen or twenty years before the move gathered much momentum. However, by the end of the last half of the 19th century every state that had been admitted to the Union had its Land Grant college. The majority got under way here in the South between 1870 and 1890. Some were established in connection with the universities. Many, including the first in Michigan, were established as independent institutions. In the beginning that, as time has demonstrated, was very wise. It was these separate and independent colleges that squarely met the challenge of the old-line order and laid the foundation for the phenominal progress we have witnessed in later years. In spite of the hostility of the established system of classical institutions both public and private, agricultural college soon won widespread popular esteem. In the beginning most of those established in connection with universities were used largely as sources of revenue. There came a

time, however, when it was a case of giving the college of agriculture an opportunity to grow and serve as it should or of setting it free. Reluctantly, in many cases, and not without change of administration of some, the powers-that-be chose to give the colleges of agriculture a chance. Given a chance, and in spite of early handicaps, they have proved their worth in all cases just as those that had been established as free and independent institutions had already done.

Today the Land Grant College system of the United States is not only the world's greatest but in its entirity is undoubtedly the world's most advanced and most effective system of public instruction and public service. Where there were seven graduates from the college in Michigan three-quarters of a century ago, annually there are now thousands of graduates. Even those who do not graduate and have had only one, two, or three years of instruction have had the advantage of some specialized preparation.

Up with the growth of the agricultural college came the growth of the experiment stations. The colleges of agriculture early discovered that they had little in fact to teach. In order to have something of definite, helpful character to bring to their students, there must be an investigation of the cause of things, as Comenius had taught a couple of centuries earlier. Science must therefore be called to the aid of the teacher. Growing out of this demand, the Hatch Act, fathered by a native of Kentucky, creating our national system of experiment stations, was signed by President Cleveland on November 2, 1887. Later other special measures providing for scientific investigation were passed by Congress and by the states. Today the experiment station system of the United States and associated research work in agriculture is the most extensive and undoubtedly the most efficient in the world.

In 1889 a bill was signed by President Cleveland creating the United States Department of Agriculture and making its head a member of the President's cabinet. Norman J. Coleman of St. Louis, a lawyer by training and an agricultural

publisher by profession, was appointed Secretary of Agriculture. Somewhere, we do not now remember, there is a statement credited to Mr. Coleman to the effect that the United States Department of Agriculture as he saw it was a nuisance, had no place in the government, and should be abolished. Mr. Coleman served for a very brief period and followed by a series of secretaries of varying abilities. These men, urged on by an ever increasing number of friends both in and out of congress, and in spite of the unfortunate training and bent of some, have made of the United States Department of Agriculture what is today the world's most powerful and most influential single agricultural institution.

The past quarter of a century has seen an expansion of agricultural education here in the United States, particularly in the South, such as could only have taken place in so great and so vast a nation as ours. By legislative act agriculture was added to the list of texts required to be taught in the public schools of many of the statesof the South at the beginning of the present century. There was much clear thinking as well as some loose thinking back in those hectic days of the 90's. In passing it is interesting to note that our Rural Free Delivery system, the Interstate Commerce Commission, and our Federal Reserve banks were all born of the agrarian unrising of that period. Watson of Georgia, Bacon of Texas, and Glass of Virginia were the fathers of these measures, now regarded as the most constructive ever enacted into law.

Then in 1914 the Smith-Lever Act creating Extension Work became a law. This measure provided for the employment of county agents and home demonstration agents throughout the United States together with the necessary supervising officers. Beginning first in the South, there are today a total of 2558 county agents with 58 per cent, or 1495, in the South; and 1392 home agents with 872, or 59 per cent, in the South, carrying the findings of the experiment stations and the laboratories into even the remotest rural communities. Joined by the teachers of the public schools these agents are now annually enrolling some four hundred thousand farm

boys and girls in the 4-H Clubs of the South. This move has strengthened and vitalized the work of both groups. A total supporting budget for the past fiscal year of upward of twenty million dollars is something of today's measure of public regard for extension work. Of this sum the counties are supplying a third, the states 28 per cent, and the Federal Government 39 per cent. Your own state of Louisiana, long a leader in this work, alone is employing county agents and home demonstration agents.

As one of the most recent developments showing the relation of education to agriculture we have the Smith-Hughes school. The bill bringing this system into being was fathered through Congress by two Georgians and signed by Woodrow Wilson in July, 1917. The Smith-Hughes school system of the United States has some 4000 full-time teachers and 1800 evening class teachers employed in the rural schools of the nation. Of the regular teachers 44 per cent and of the evening class teachers 67 per cent are employed here in the twelve Southern States.

As Rabelais urged in the 16th century, the material for these schools is not only drawn more from the external world than from books, but draws the home and school together in vital contact. And though this is new it is already exercising a most powerful and most helpful influence on the farm and its home. These schools, together with extension work, the experiment station, and the agricultural college - the father of them all,- are all products of the vital relationship that has grown up here between education and agriculture during the past half century. And each in its own way is contributing to the solid foundation now being laid under the social, economic, and spiritual life of the farm.

In what I have said I have dealt largely in history and in general terms. More definite emphasis upon what education has done for agriculture will help to a clearer conception of its profound practical value. It is perfectly apparent, ofcourse, that the college of agriculture has not failed of its purpose. Neither do we question the place or value of agriculture in our public schools.

What becomes of agricultural college graduates, why it is that they do not all go back to the farm, are questions that many times have been asked.

For the most part agricultural college students have been called into the service of the public schools, other colleges of agriculture, into the service of the experiment stations, into the Department of Agriculture at Washington, into county agent work, into the Smith-Hughes school system, or into other positions demanding this special type of training. They for the most part have been called into positions of leadership where their training has counted or may count for most. There, however, have been many who have gone back to the farm and there set outstanding examples of progress and efficiency. As a result of the work of these leaders, we have all but seen the passing of scrub farm animals and scrub farm crops. We have learned to successfully combat the disastrous insect enemies and contagious diseases of other days. Hog cholera is not the dreaded menace it was a generation ago. The cattle tick has all but been wiped out. His passing has opened an opportunity to build a dairy and cattle industry in which we can find both pride and profit. There is no victory in modern combat, no matter what field you may wish to consider, more outstanding or more glorious than that of the forces of Florida over the Mediterranean fruit fly. The American farmer is today the world's greatest per capita producer and in efficiency stands at par with the worker in industry. With countless others, the college of agriculture, through its trained men and women has given us this victory and others still greater await.

We are now coming into a period of agricultural organization, the natural harvest of the plantings of other days. Whatever may be the mistakes and whatever may be the criticisms, agricultural organization is making definite progress and is rendering incalculable service. The twelve Land Banks, established by the government in 1916 and bringing the farmer his first cheap money, lacks only a little now of belonging to him outright.

The general depression coupled with the low prices for cotton has forced many banks to close their doors. Some fifteen or more closed in the Mississippi Delta, tying up some ten million in deposits and bringing about a complete breakdown in credit facilities. Early in its history the Staple Cooperative Cotton Association

organized an Intermediate Credit Corporation. This was done that the Delta Farmer might take advantage of funds to be had through our Intermediate Credit Bank System established at the demand of the farmer in 1923, and by so doing meet its responsibility to itself and to its grower members. Through its years of experience it has not only learned how to supply production credit at a minimum of expense to the grower, but has built up cash reserves and a reputation whose value today are past measuring.

The first year of the operation of the credit of this association $500,000 were loaned. Loans now stand at many millions. This money is made available to the farmer month by month as he needs it and when he needs it, to be drawn by him from February to September. And the interest rate has never exceeded six per cent. When that is scaled down to apply to the average amount used during the nine months period, the average rate, as it will be seen, is much less than six per cent. During the past season this corporation was practically the only source of credit open to the Mississippi Delta farmer. Except for the fact that it has ten to fifteen million dollars at his call, funds with which to produce the crop of the present year could not have been obtained. On this point there is complete agreement in the Delta area. Is it not easy to imagine what the condition would be in that region if the growers were unable to get funds with which to carry on? The answer, of course, is economic and social disaster and all the suffering this would entail.

The president of this organization had his training at the Mississippi A. & M. College. The general manager is a graduate of that same institution. So, too, are many of the employees and members of the Board of Directors. It did not just happen that this is so. The Mississippi Agricultural College planted the seed of the leadership that is today producing this glorious harvest, this matchless service. This one instance of its work is enough to justify the cost of the institution that gave these men their training from the day it was founded even down to this good day. And yet that institution, as your great college here in Louisiana, and as every one here in the South, has sent out its thousands who perhaps in less conspicuous places yet in no less effective manner are helping to shape the course of agriculture and the nation toward better days.

The Farm Bureau Federation with its splendid record of progress, with its splendid contribution to the farmers of the state, is another case in point. And I would be negligent of my duty both to you as well as to your own college of agriculture and its work, not to give it proper recognition here today. Here are units of that mighty array of institutions that are building more solidly the foundation of our great republic.

Turning our attention to some of the larger public questions there are those who regard the widespread effort to secure economic equality for agriculture as some strange phenonemon. There is nothing at all strange about it and nothing to be surprised at. Had development not been as it has and when it has we would have reason for grave concern. Our system of agricultural education had its beginning in an effort not only to afford the country child fuller opportunity for development and to bring to agriculture its just reward in dollars, but that a day might come whendthe farmer would have an adequate means of expression in the shaping of all plans and policies affecting the course of our national life. We are simply harvesting a natural crop. That's all. The man is not surprised at the ripening corn in due season if planting and cultivation were what they should have been. The same logic forces the conclusion that agriculture has a better day ahead - a day of harvest.

Let it be emphasized that the struggle for economic equality for agriculture is just in its beginning. It will go on until the grave injustices of the moment give way to justice and opportunity. Recent events are of the profoundest significance. It should be a matter of grave concern to every thoughtful individual that the agricultural public, representing almost a third of the total population of the nation, a division of the public that is just as efficient as any other, a division that is producing the basic human necessities and the raw materials of all the people, is drawing only ten per cent of the national income. If agriculture was drawing its sha re of the national income to which its efficiency and contribution to national wealth certainly entitles it, and if it had been drawing its share over a period of years,

the nation today would have a most comforting reserve upon which to draw in this moment of great stress.

Many are the facts that have brought about the unjust situation now prevailing. Chief among them are those handicaps that have been imposed by the government itself. Over a long period of years the government has favored other and more powerful groups at the expense of the farmer. The farmer has not only seen the transfer of his wealth to the urban center, to the industrial center, but he has come to understand how this has been accomplished. Many an indsutrialist is today viewing with regret the "bigger barns" he built yesterday and that stand idle. He realizes that he has been most foolish, and in sober afterthought is willing to lend a hand at intelligent readjustment.

The fight for economic justice for the farm will go on until the present situation is corrected. Nothing less will meet the demands pf either justice or national security.

Let us remember as we glance onward to the goal, the prosperous the secure farm home, that we have come into a period at last when agriculture has the necessary leadership to carry on, a leadership that knows its mind, and is unafraid. Not only have we the necessary leadership but back of this leadership we have the reinforcement of that vast army of men and women who have passed through and are passing through our consolidated schools, vocational schools, 4-H Club work, and even their elders who make up the organized agricultural societies of the nation. In these we have today's guarantee of tomorrow's victory.

What a privilege and opportunity is yours and mine!